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THE EVILS OF OUR BENCH

By JEROME J. LICARI

Member New York Bar and Former Assistant District Attorney

NOT so long ago the lower criminal bench of New York City was rocked from its foundations. Magistrates were ousted by the Appellate Division; one Assistant Attorney confessed the guilt that was not only his, but honeycombed a whole putrid system; several policemen proved felons; even a judge of a higher criminal Court was openly accused of pre-empting his judgeship and almost mobbed in a public street. Some years before, an aspirant to the Supreme Court had been sentenced to Sing Sing prison for attempting to purchase a seat on that exalted Bench, like a seat on the Stock Exchange. And the New York Bench is admittedly one of the cleanest in the country! The thinking public was recently disquieted by another scandal in the State of New Jersey, where a foul barter and sale seemed to have been consummated.

What is wrong with our Bench?

The Bench should be viewed in the light of a shrine. It should never be reached by simony or intrigue. It should be graced by the best in the legal profession, by the best obtainable upon all standards. If we compare out present method of selection with this ideal of the Bench, we must blush in shame, for our judges are not selected by *any* standard. The arbiters of their selection are politicians, total laymen of the law, and undeniable sticklers for their henchmen.

Let us take our City of New York. Here Magistrates and Special Sessions Judges are appointed by the Mayor; Municipal Court and Supreme Court Judges are elected by the people, as well as County and General Sessions Judges. So say the Charter and other applicable laws. But does the Mayor appoint, or do the people elect? The present Mayor of New York City is a conspicuous exception, and there is no question that he appoints his judges; still, in normal party rule, the Mayor has as much to do with it as the janitor of City Hall. How is it done? Simply. The District Leaders present names of candidates to the County Leader, and that gentleman has the final word and presents his choice to the Mayor. And the Mayor makes the appointment. Nor is any secret made about the whole matter. For days, often weeks, the newspapers blubber it all out. They publish, with naïve candor, the names of the various contestants, their political angels, the different organizations that sponsor each, the County Leader's (not the Mayor's) stand as to this, that and the other aspirant. The candidates' qualifications are seldom, if ever, discussed. In the end, the winner may be more or less known, or entirely unknown; he may be a good lawyer, or an indifferent one, or a bad one; he may or may not have had experience in the District Attorney's or in the Corporation Counsel's office; but knowledge and experience are not his main claims. He is selected with a political eye. He is subjected to no tests.

Identical methods obtain in the designation of candidates for elective judgeships. The District Leaders in the Municipal Court Districts together pick each candidate; the local County Leader (on contested claims) the City, County Court, and General Sessions candidates; and the several County Leaders pick the Supreme Court candidates for the respective Judicial Districts—not always in furtherance of public interests, often by bi-partisan barter, sometimes to advance the kith and kin of some brilliant party lawyer, or of a puissant boss. And after the candidates are thus picked, what happens? Why, the party electorate votes for them. There are no other candidates on the ballot. And so, when one party predominates in power, designation is tantamount to election. No tests here either. None. Candidates simply ride onto the Bench on a wave of favoritism.

Well, I should make one correction. I have said that Supreme Court Judges are designated by the several County Leaders. On the surface that statement is wrong, because Supreme Court Judges are, under our law, nominated in Judicial Conventions of Delegates purposely elected by the people. But who are the Judicial Delegates? Favorites of District Leaders, lodged on the ballot by District Leaders, instructed by District Leaders, who in turn are instructed by the County Leader. So, when the Judicial Convention assembles, the Chair recognizes some pre-designated Cicero, who amidst aulic cheers, pompuously nominates the pre-designated candiate, to the frenzied delight of the foregathered populace; and the Judicial Delegates elected by the people to exercise a free choice—the Judicial Delegates (all house-broken pets of District Clubs)—make it unanimous. And that is that. Here, too, no tests. There is no law that, anywhere in the Union, demands any qualifications, save the length of years of practice.

The aftermath of such a system must be calamitous. If he is at all human, the judge (whose tenure, by the way, runs only for a term of years) cannot be ungrateful. He cannot offord it—and he knows it. He knows that the Machine exalted him to the Bench. He knows also that, if he forgets, he can be reminded. Machines have long arms. And, furthermore, can a man of flesh and blood be expected to forget? The Machine comprises many acquaintances he has made in clubs, at balls, at political affairs; many public officers and politicians of whom he has in the past asked favors, and to whom he has done favors before donning his robe, so that favoring has become a reciprocal custom; the closer friends and powerful higher-ups that "made" him; good mixers,

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with whom he has spent memorable days and evenings and with whom he has fought side by side in political campaigns; people who, by long militant association, are unquestionably the truest and dearest friends he has. Can human nature be expected to doff its frailties when it dons a robe?

Let us be fair about the situation. Neither judges nor politicians are to blame. Our judges are high-minded gentlemen who mean well. Let me add emphatically that, despite the popular misconception. I also know personally a number of high-minded politicians. Like every thinking individual, they, too, deprecate the present Judiciary System. But they found it as it is—and, under such a system, they must often act unpleasant rôles with as much compelling fatality as the characters in a Greek tragedy.

What is the answer? In England Judges are selected by an entirely different method. They must not only pass rigid examinations in all branches of the law, but they must also be scholars in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics, and in most collegiate and university subjects. They must be cultured gentlemen. When they become candidates for the Bench, they must take fresh examinations in both *legal* and *academic* subjects. In France, Italy, Germany, in most European countries, much the same system prevails; it prevails as well, in some South American commonwealths.

In all those countries the Bench is, as it should be, a legal, not a political career. It is reached by the best efforts of the best members of the legal profession, not by a scramble of opportunists. A brilliant young man fresh from the University takes examinations for the *lowest* Bench, where he secures his first experience. He starts at the bottom and stays there for a prescribed term, before qualifying for a higher stall. His judicial conduct is severely scanned; his publications, if any, and his decisions give him the right to a higher place on the list for the next higher Bench; his reversals count against him; and, when it comes to actual promotion, he must submit to fresh examinations. Thus is his mind kept at razor's edge, and Law, not politics, becomes his vocation and his life-work. Is not that the answer for us, too, even if our tests may not be so severe?

The only method by which our Bench can be redeemed is to adopt some such system. A new leaf must be turned. The present antiquated system must be discarded. The Bench must be taken out of politics. Merit must prevail over time-serving. Competitive tests on high standards must be open to all. The best must be secured. The best must be continually kept at their best. The Bench must be their life-work, not a political reward. Higher Benches must be reached by promotion tests. Thus, and thus only, can our Bench rise to its proper level.

SOCIOLOGICAL NOTES

By WILLIAM SEAGLE

I

Leisure is the opportunity to rest from other people's labor.

II

A liberal is a conservative with a bad conscience.

III

If revolutionists want better results, they will stop throwing occasional bombs and take to the repeated throwing of rotten vegetables.

IV

Free speech should be regarded as the very foundation of the established order. Endless debate means endless procrastination.

V

Fascism: The Purgatory of Communism.

WEST-COAST BOHEMIA

By DONALD MILLER

SADAKICHI HARTMANN was in Florida—ill and broke. A banquet was arranged to bring him to Los Angeles. Giovanni Muschi, "last of the guerilla artists," and Maverick Terrill, a Hollywood writer, mailed four hundred invitations. I personally visited at least twenty-five of his friends, who promised to be on hand. Numerous singers, violinists, pianists and even a man with a marionette promised to entertain.

The banquet was held at the Fior D' Italia, a famous landmark in the old quarter of Los Angeles, a supposed rendezvous for painters, writers, musicians, and boozers whose conversation is interesting—a café containing a large, low-ceilinged room with a dance-floor in the middle, a piano and a bar at one end, and wooden booths along the sides; and best of all, a magnificent grape arbor enclosed by red-brick walls, and illuminated by colored paper lanterns.

On the night of the banquet fifty large caricatures of Sadakichi, made by a young painter named Brossard, were plastered all over the grape arbor. At eight-thirty about twenty people were in the café, but they sat inside to avoid paying an extra twenty-five cents to bring back Sadakichi. At nine o'clock there were about thirty persons in the grape arbor, mostly shop-girls and counter-jumpers who had come to gape at the Bohemians. None of sponsors of the banquet were present—no artists of any consequence—only a few hack writers, mediocre piano pounders and studio scenery painters. At nine-thirty only one of the entertainers had arrived, and he refused to sing, claiming the cold would injure his voice. The guest of honor, a famous illustrator, had failed to come. Muschi had invited Leopold Fleischman, a newspaper man, to act as master of ceremonies, and then walked off and left him alone. Fleischman decided to go home, but I caught him at the door, and he promised to remain. A little antique dealer lurched in wearing a chrysanthemum—Sadakichi's favorite flower—almost as large as himself, and began bellowing insults at everyone in the place, while he waved a whiskey bottle around his head. This enlivened the crowd for a short time. Then sixteen people entered, some of them wearing evening clothes, and sat in the grape arbor without giving a dime for Sadakichi.

I decided to have some action. With several recruits I lifted the piano out from under the pianist who was performing for the crowd inside, and took it into the grape arbor amidst a barrage of curses and complaints. A young fellow promised to play the piano, but disappeared after two pieces. Then Brossard did an excellent imitation of Sadakichi's dancing. A pause followed. Finally an Italian basso consented to sing, and was followed by an old woman who did a Spanish dance. Then our second pianist vanished. There was no one to entertain. While I looked for someone, a few irritated patrons from the inner room carried away the piano. The crowd asked where the entertainers were, demanded their food and called for more drinks to ward off boredom. Muschi, who had returned to the grape arbor, left in disgust.

When the crowd was intoxicated, laughing and shouting, Leopold Fleischman, who had risen from a sick-bed to attend, got up and started to speak. He was greeted by cat-calls and guffaws. People pounded on the tables. A dozen of them howled, "Who the hell is Sadakichi Hartmann?" Another dozen howled, "We paid our money to keep him in Florida, not to bring him back."

Fleischman continued talking, while a woman stuffed a napkin into the mouth of a noisy Hollywood sign-painter. His talk was good. At its end he made an appeal for money. I walked around with someone's hat. Nothing was dropped into it. Then a fine-looking Chinese youth rose, walked toward me, and dropped in fifty cents. Two more people put in dimes. Meanwhile, a young

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painter stood up, and holding onto the table to keep his balance screamed at the crowd, "There you sit, boozing, gorging—and Sadakichi, a better man than any of you, is in Florida starving! There you sit, a bunch of God damned swine, too cheap to let loose of the nickels you probably robbed from someone! What have any of you ever done? What the hell good are you? Sadakichi has done more than the whole room-full of you. You don't mean anything! You're riff-raff. Pigs, dolts, scum! You never did anything important. And there you sit, a bunch of God damned . . ." Someone grabbed him by the arm, and jerked him down into his seat, or perhaps his hands slid off the table.

The crowd was stunned. One man applauded. Several people arose and departed. I continued making the collection. The mob pretended they were too drunk to comprehend what was expected of them when I asked them for money. A few of them dropped in pennies. At another table a Jew donated five dollars. I didn't believe that a Californian could be so generous, so I asked him where he was from. "Chicago," he said. I chuckled. Two or three more Jews, probably from Chicago also, contributed currency. The rest of the gang present must have added at least a dollar *in toto*.

I took the hat into the inner room, accompanied by Terrill, who cajoled the crowd while I passed the hat, and there I collected from at least seventy-five people almost two dollars, and several insults. There were drunken women wandering around the room. An intoxicated female sat at the piano hammering out the "St. Louis Blues." A crowd, the same as in any low-class café, jammed the dance-floor. At the tables people were stomping, singing and yelling. Several arguments were going on.

I decided to get the cut from the house and leave. The owner of the place cried in my ears that she had six waiters to pay and was losing money, while the place was packed with humans and wine was on every table. A boisterous painter—one of the two or three there—tossed a tumbler of wine into the air, and it alighted on a woman's lap. Her escort leaped up and accused the wrong man. The proprietor ran after waiters to have someone thrown out. I got all the money I could and left the place.

Someone had told me Los Angeles had a Bohemia. This was it: a place where a mob of pot-wallopers and shirt-salesmen caroused and brawled like a bunch of hogs! I thanked God that Huneker had died soon enough.

PRODUCERS, PLAYWRIGHTS AND CRITICS

by GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

THERE is something to be said for our theatrical producers and playwrights who have lately been inveighing in the public prints against the drama critics. It is a pity that, for all their lush verbosity, they haven't been able to say it for themselves. To contend, for example, as Mr. Elmer Rice has, that certain critics are alcoholics and in the last stages of senility may—let us agree for the sake of argument—be sound enough truth in itself, but it has nothing to do with their competence as critics, however much it may have to do with what the police and their wives publicly or privately, as the case may be, think of them. Strindberg, who was not only a boozer and senile but commonly reputed to be downright insane, confected dramatic criticism that makes that of such a relatively youthful teetotaler as myself, for example, look like a child's scribblings. Coleridge, grantedly one of the finest critics that ever lived, was a dope fiend, and Hazlitt, Lamb and Steele, certainly all worthy fellows, as Mr. Rice would allow, were under the table night after night. Poe and Whitman, the latter senile by Mr. Rice's definition, were galoots for rum, and Saintsbury—as everyone knows—could drain a magnum in nine and three-eighths seconds flat. Huneker's beloved nose was often mistaken by strangers from out of town for a Rubra Superba peony, but Mr. Rice wouldn't argue that, even when Jim was in his latest years, it in the least diminished the brilliant color of his critical writings. Some of the profoundest asses who have ever mussed up type pages with criticism, on the other hand, have been and are comparative youngsters or total abstainers. (Let us politely refrain from mentioning names.)

For a reason that is hard to make out, dramatic criticism is the only profession concerned with the arts in which a man of increased years is supposed to know less than he did in his earlier years, and in which a practitioner is supposed to be *non compos* if, like Shakespeare or Thomas Huxley, he likes a drink now and then.

Such animadversions as Mr. Rice's, accordingly, are blood cousins to stupidity. They are as hollow and empty, indeed, as the recent plays of Mr. Rice himself, who is neither senile nor a dipsomaniac. The arguments against the critics, which he and his fellow playwrights and producers seem to be unable to think up, are quite different. Not against all of the critics, to be sure, but against a sufficient proportion of them to give their statement a reasonable justice. In view of the fogginess of these critic-baiters, let one himself a critic come professionally and hospitably to their assistance.

The first objection the producers and playwrights might rationally make against much of the current dramatic criticism is its confusing habit of denouncing certain inferior plays and praising others that are equally inferior. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder the producers don't know where they stand so far as the critical press reaction goes, and gradually go crazy.

A second objection is to the kind of critic who lambasts the tar out of a play and subsequently, by way of attesting to his magnanimity and freedom from personal prejudice, hypocritically and self-insultingly (albeit he doesn't seem to recognize the fact) allows that he "hopes it succeeds anyway and makes a million dollars."

A third objection is to the kind of critic—usually one with punditical overtones—who justifies his endorsement of a cheap farce and his condemnation of an ambitious piece of dramatic writing

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with the ancient critical claptrap that a piece of work must be accepted on its own terms and that the cheap farce, which pretends to be nothing more than what it is and sets out only to be amusing, is deserving of greater praise than the ambitious play which sets out to reach the moon and on the way stumbles once or twice over a few stars. If a play is always and inevitably to be accepted critically on its own terms and the success with which it meets them, "Sailor, Beware!"—as every such contending critic must agree—is three times as critically commendable as Shakespeare's "Cymbeline" or Rostand's "Chantecler."

A fourth objection is to the species of critic who yaps loudly for beauty in drama and who, when at length he is vouchsafed just a little of it by some aspiring, uncommercial producer, loudly objects to the whole enterprise because there wasn't more of it—and declares the occasion, consequently, a total failure.

A fifth objection is the benevolent habit of praising a leading actress or actor in ratio to a play's lack of merit. The worse a play, the better notices the leading actress or actor seems bound to get.

A sixth objection is to the critics' constant plea for a finer and nobler theatre, a theatre of authentic dramatic art, and their unwitting discouragement of any producer who might have ambitions in such a direction with their periodic hysterical eulogies of the ordinary products of the present commercial theatre. Think of the producer who hopefully dreams of instituting a theatre of uncommercial dramatic splendor and then picks up a newspaper and reads such endorsements as these: "'Dodsworth' is one of the greatest plays I have ever seen;" "'The Distaff Side' is a masterpiece of our time;" "'Lost Horizons' is one of the most notable dramatic experiments, and one of the most moving, of our times;" "'Merrily We Roll Along' will surely make history in the American theatre;" "'The Farmer Takes a Wife' is just what our theatre has been longing for and so badly needs;" "'Judgment Day' is one of the modern theatre's most thrilling and stirring plays;" "'Merrily We Roll Along' is a play which proved its power to blow its first official audience's heart into particles of sheer gratitude;" "'Divided By Three' is one of the theatre's superior items;" "'Roll, Sweet Chariot' is a remarkable achievement;" "'Small Miracle' is exactly what the theatre has been crying for;" "'Spring Freshet' stems from that inner urge which is the source of any author's finest work;" "'A Ship Comes In' brings the kind of brave intelligence into the theatre that the theatre needs;" "'Lost Horizons' is a stimulating and imaginative play, arresting in conception and engrossing to the end;" and—in the somewhat higher quarter—"'L'Aiglon' is one of the world's plays magnificent!"

Even if the producer in question sought to put such stuff down to critical charity in an off season, what would he think when he reflected that the same deplorable absence of standards is visible year after year? Where would be his desire to risk something really fine when, after reading such tributes, he turned to the journals of the previous season and again encountered such disheartening critical news as this: "'Come of Age' is a rare adventure in the theatre;" "Don't waste a minute. Run and buy tickets for 'Ten Minute Alibi';" "'The Dark Tower' is a real treat for literate and intelligent playgoers;" "'The Dark Tower' is a lavish experience in the theatre;" "'Theodora, the Quean' glows with life as a drama;" "'By Your Leave' is truly witty, often truly touching; it will be one of the pet plays of the town;" "'They Shall Not Die' is a masterpiece;" "'No More Ladies' is a comedy masterpiece;" "'Men In White' is one of the theatre's more magnificent dramas;" "'She Loves Me Not' is what the theatre must have more, a lot more, of;" "'The World Waits' is in many respects triumphant drama;" "'Double Door' is a gem;" and "'The Shining Hour' pretty well represents all that is best in the theatre."

ASTERISKS FALL ON ALABAMA

By FLOYD TILLERY

DURING the months just passed in the state where the stars fell, agitators and organizers—supposedly emissaries of the Communist Party—reappeared in the rural districts near the noted Camp Hill community, where the white crusaders for racial equality, class solidarity and a proletarian revolution resumed their subversive operations among the Negro share-croppers and day-laborers. In the north-eastern corner of Lee County at least one successful "Union" was perfected, with a membership of fifteen or twenty colored "Comrades."

Several weeks later, in a white settlement near the location of this "Union," a number of farm-houses and barns were suddenly discovered in uncontrollable flames—all these burnings occurring on successive nights. In each instance the buildings belonged to well-to-do land-owners. Careful investigation disclosed that, unmistakably, wholesale arson had been committed. Quickly recalling former and similar depredations, calculated both to destroy and to terrorize, the white people immediately became suspicious of Communist activities among the native Negroes.

In addition and almost concurrently with the burning of the farm-houses and barns, several of the more prominent landlords began receiving—apparently from a common source—a number of brazenly insulting and menacing letters, all with black-hand signatures. In some cases the envelopes bearing the intimidations were embellished with crude drawings of coffins. Some of the letters were direct threats upon the lives of the men to whom they were addressed; others were in the nature of peremptory demands for higher wages.

Therefore, the adult male white citizens of the district deemed it urgently expedient that they organize themselves into a body of Vigilantes. Soon thereafter one Negro suspect was apprehended. When put through the third-degree, the culprit confessed—among several other more important items—that it was he who, at the instigation of the white leaders of the "Union," had set fire to the beautiful home and commodious barn of one of the most highly esteemed planters in eastern East Alabama.

* * *

Years ago, it is said that Benjamin Franklin, while in his cups, let the news leak out that he and his rebel associates had successfully signed a certain Declaration of Independence. Fear reigned in the hearts of many Philadelphians for many weeks following. Recently, however, in Lee County, Alabama (while much fear still reigns in many hearts), no one seems to know just who spilled the beans about the complete frustration of plans of another group of rebels—Alabama Black Men, this time, evidently bent upon securing what they had termed a New Independence for themselves and their oppressed comrades. But, anyway, the secret is out; and the well-grounded and generally accepted rumor goes to the following tune:

On the evening of the 1934 cotton-picking season, a certain "Union" of Negroes, organized in northeastern Lee County by white agitators from the North and East, were holding a midnight meeting, in a Negro cabin, for the purpose of determining who should have the honor of killing the leading white landlords of the neighborhood. A unique method of lot-drawing was employed. A "dead-line," it seems, was etched upon the floor at one end of the room, while the Militant Colored Comrades were huddled together on their knees at the other end of the room, holding curious little wooden blocks in their rebellious hands. On the 1-2-3 count, each zealot was to roll his block. The one whose token came closest

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to the "dead-line" would win "highest honors;" and so on until all the Merciless and Avaricious Persecutors whose names were proscribed were properly allotted to the various conspirators.

When the first roll was made, an old Negro of sixty-five was the lucky man. He would enjoy the vindictive pleasure and honorable distinction of dispatching the community's richest farmer, and, therefore, the arch-enemy of the oppressed. But, very suddenly, the present was wholly forgotten in the old black man's God-fearing mind, and only the past and future existed. The marked white man was the old Negro's friend—his very best friend—he had lived with him peacefully for more than thirty years—he loved him. "I jes' cain't do it, Comrades!" the black traitor called out. "I jes' cain't do it! Y'all kin kill me if yo' wants to, but somebody elst is gwinter hafter kill dat man!" Whereupon a true and fearless Comrade—a young Negro whose block had come next closest—jumped to his feet begging for the privilege of playing Black Brutus to the Imperial White Tyrant.

But just as this young hero, in his own paraphrased vernacular, referred to his patriotic duty as "shooting the god-dam dirty brains out of the white bastard," the band of Vigilantes—who, like the Creek Indians of 1812, had been lying in wait for their prey, and eavesdropping the while—dashed into the cabin, took charge of the situation, and quickly restored law and order for a radius of fifty miles. A few days later the talk was going round the neighborhood and contiguous territories that some fifteen or twenty Negro men were "missing" from this particular community.

Some ten or twelve days afterward, the decomposed body of a Negro suddenly rose to the surface of the back-waters of the Chattahoochee River in the southeastern section of Lee County—a distance of twenty-five or thirty miles from the cabin where the block-rolling party was staged. Iron weights of various kinds had been fastened to the wrists and ankles of the victim. A few days later, and a second such body appeared. And simultaneously, but in another direction from the bailiwick of the aforementioned Vigilantes, the swollen and unrecognizable corpses of four more black men were found floating on the river.

Then some soothsayer gave out the prophecy that twenty-one more dead black bucks were destined soon to come up out of the Chattahoochee. Presently one native white, living on the bank of the river where the first two water-logged cadavers were observed, hastened to report that he and his wife were awakened in the dead of night by interminably thudding noises of the dead bodies as they were being unloaded from a truck into the deep stream. "Ker-ploonk! Ker-ploonk! Like so many logs being dumped into the river." Pretty soon, then, as days of avid watchful-waiting passed, there were "Five!" "Seven!" "Nine!" "Thirteen" and, finally, "Twenty-three niggers what have done come to the top, down in the back-waters!"

But, living close to this place where Dead Men Rise Up Ever, there are reputable and trustworthy citizens who are positive that only two bodies have appeared in the streams of that locality. According to the statement of one of these men: "A certain gentlemen, well-informed, told me that some fifteen or twenty Negroes were unquestionably disposed of. Their bodies, however, he said, were distributed to various deep ponds of water, only two being apportioned to the Chattahoochee at this point."

A number of Negroes—good, honest, hard-working, poor, law-abiding inhabitants—were interviewed in the friendliest and most tactful manner possible for the purpose of obtaining, from their angle, information and rumor; for the purpose, also, of observing reactions and attitudes. Each terrorized black man answered: "Boss, I declare I jes' don't know nuthin' a-tall about it! Nawsir, I sho don't. Thankee, Boss, thankee! 'N good-day, sir!"

WOLFE, WOLFE!

by RICHARD SHERIDAN AMES

THE American reader, fooled so often by his critical Cassandras, is himself loathe to acclaim an incipient fine talent which appears quietly without incriminating *kudos*.

Nevertheless, "Look Homeward, Angel" has gone through six large editions since its publication in 1929 and Thomas Wolfe's more casual prose has practically subsidized *Scribner's Magazine* during lean years. His major germination, "Of Time and the River," an immense novel of 450,000 words, is at last in the hands of the printer and the earlier work, recently canonized as a popular reprint Giant, may at length introduce our only young writer of any considerable stature to a wider public.

Wolfe, whose powerful, often ungainly prose placed him at once among the generic novelists of tradition, has not lacked individual praise. Speaking before the Nobel Olympians at Stockholm in 1930 Sinclair Lewis said: "Thomas Wolfe, a child . . . whose one and only novel, 'Look Homeward, Angel', is worthy to be compared with the best in our literary production, a Gargantuan creature with great gusto of life." And Percy Mackaye termed Wolfe's shorter work "quintessential poetry."

But there has been no organized cry of "Wolfe, Wolfe!", no publisher's pyrotechnics. Though it seems almost too good to be true, a young American writer has emerged in the fulness of his initial power without being swaddled in ruinous comparisons or suffocated by that contemporaneity surcharged with doom which gives him his blatant hour of photographs, autographs and literary teas—and certain extinction.

To my knowledge no one has yet written that Thomas Wolfe "writes like an angel". He has not run afoul of the law, the book clubs, the Pulitzer prize, or the literary lobbyists who inflate reputations and are effectively laxative in purging the reader's consciousness of all taste while confecting their best-sellers.

Wolfe is, almost literally, a Scribner virgin.

He is that *rara avis*, a modern author who writes, who writes diligently and enormously from a kind of inner solitude. Gertrude Stein didn't hatch him. He is indigenous to America and lives—of all prosaic places—in Brooklyn. His pre-nuptial liaison with letters was placid, for he did not learn about life from the insides of a shark or the small talk of Pamplona *aficionados*. He has been mercifully reticent about himself, and if his first novel grazed in the pastures of autobiography it did not come to a full stop beside a narcissist pool nor was its general objectivity blemished.

Wolfe's defects and faults of artistic discipline can be judged in time by the proper criteria of competent critics. The general public is permitted to read him for what he is worth and has not been forced to speculate as to whether he is a love-child or a hermaphrodite, a Marxian or post-Humanist throwback. His is the name above the printed work, that alone, and properly. The fortunate iconoclasm of such a position is attested to by the dislocated launchings of the apostolic Paul Engle, Paul Horgan, William Saroyan, Tess Schlesinger, *et al.* One does not need to get Van Wyck Brooks from the shelf to fathom the plight of the writer in America. Exploitation is the first frost that nips the careers of the youngsters. It seems to sell mouth-washes, but it is fallible in building up authors' reputations.

Some new writers possess creditable competence and it is no easy matter for them to get a hearing. No Upton Sinclair has arisen with an EPIC plan for the economics of literature. As things stand, the unendowed author who creates even passably worth-while stuff has no right to expect that his work will support him. If he is versatile and predatory he may wangle handouts from the radio,

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the cinema, or the newspaper syndicates. But the reasonable dividends from his own profession, practised conscientiously, won't supply him with a change of galluses annually or any personal real estate more impressive than a lean-to. Unless he subsists on the government pay-rolls, a young writer must construe self-expression as something of a luxury—of no value economically and of scant interest to other beleaguered citizens outside his own kind.

Only the ablest can hope to survive indifference and the lack of cash. A literary tyro who expects a villa at Cannes or some private Vallambrosa in Beverly Hills as the result of one hastily spewed volume will, in the vernacular, get stung very badly. The youth with something important to say may experience the devil of a time while he says it, but his progress will be normal. His middle years of mature craftsmanship should provide reasonable security and stimulation sufficient for enviable accomplishment. Such writers may have to wait a decade before their names will mean anything in public libraries, but once there they will stick. They will be read because they have conceived something memorable, not merely a temporary gland stimulator.

One magazine has referred to the "incomparable richness" of Thomas Wolfe's work. Even his poorest pieces have vitality and his best, like "No Door", were conceived by a prodigous, untrammelled imagination and executed with such robust energy that one is forced to ponder again the source and resources of genius—an uncommon procedure in these days when we have flung at us the most provocative examples of what genius certainly is not.

The fate of a writer whose honesty and power prevent him from becoming a morbid fashion, whose creative sources are artesian rather than lightly sub-surface, who lacks critical coddling and the notoriety furnished by fraternal Peeping Toms, is currently a matter for intense speculation. Contemporary literary trends are as hard to chart as the ecstatic explorations of the New Deal. It is already a toss-up whether the work of the ascendant proletarian school or the intermittent swan songs of the writers who decorated the dreary post-war decade will be forgotten first. While the critics are sorting out the infant Whitmans and dolling up Iowa's Engle to be America's Rupert Brooke, Thomas Wolfe has the field of the traditional novel almost to himself. He projects no new formula and invents no dewy patois. He seems content to portray character, a love of earth and sky, and the troubled souls of men, all built into an impressive edifice by a poet's integration.

Can he be the real thing, at last?

MUSIC DEPRECIATION

By ***DAVID EWEN***

Author, "From Bach To Stravinsky," "The Unfinished Symphony," etc.

EVERY Friday morning the glucose voice of Mr. Walter Damrosch pours, like so much thick syrup, from the radio loudspeakers of America bringing what he so optimistically terms a "music-appreciation" course to some six million young and plastic minds. "Good morning, my young friends," is Papa Damrosch's weekly signal to an army of would-be music lovers that the distribution of musical lollypops is about to begin.

It has been said before by other critics that, with the incredible opportunity of shaping and developing the musical tastes of an entire country resting snugly in the palm of his hand, Mr. Damrosch, pathetically enough, resorts to a mere twiddling of thumbs and old-wives' tales for his weekly discourse. The lament, however, should be an even more poignant one. For I have long been convinced, after listening to Mr. Damrosch's music hours for several years, that they are not quite so innocuous as these critics might lead us to believe; that, as a matter of fact, these weekly broadcasts are a decidedly pernicious influence. They will ultimately smother any incipient sensitivity for appreciating good music that his young listeners might possess, and make any intelligent approach to the musical art quite impossible in the future. It will take a strong emetic to purge Mr. Damrosch's listeners of all the sweetmeats, cream puffs and charlotte russes which he has given them for a musical diet—and, if they have not already been altogether poisoned in their tastes, it will probably require many years of a new and rigorous diet in order to restore them to a healthy appetite for music.

I refer, first of all, to the strange partnership between great music and music of an altogether pedestrian quality that comes into being at the majority of Mr. Damrosch's broadcasts. I am always suspicious of musical tastes which are broad enough to embrace a Bach and a Suppé, a Beethoven and a Sousa. The intelligent man must be able clearly to discriminate. Yet a lack of any such discrimination is one of the outstanding qualities of Mr. Damrosch's courses. Mozart becomes a bed-fellow of Victor Herbert; Thomas' "Overture to Mignon" is treated with the same humility and reverence as Beethoven's "Coriolanus;" a Sousa march will sometimes follow in the footsteps of Bach. What taste can the millions of young listeners possibly develop after listening each week to this amazing hodge-podge of sublime and jejune music, all treated with equal enthusiasm, zest and admiration?

But a lack of discrimination between the good and the mediocre is by no means the greatest fault of Mr. Damrosch's lectures. Much more serious, and even more lamentable, is the fact that Mr. Damrosch brings his listeners an altogether false and destructive approach to music. The most difficult problem in training a layman to appreciate great music fully and intelligently is to rid him of the infantile practise of searching in each piece of music for a story, of finding pleasure only in such musical works as may be translated in his mind from tones to pictures. True music-appreciation can come only when the layman has learned, at last, to hear "sound" alone, and to derive impressions, sensations and finally human experiences from different sound qualities, harmonic and contrapuntal effects, developments and enlargements of themes. This can only be done by purging the mind of the preconceived prejudice that music tells a story, and by acquiring the habit—either through concentration, experience, or through a knowledge of musical technique—of listening to music *as music*. This, I confess, is not an easy problem in music-education, but it should be the first and most important problem with which the educator must cope.

Mr. Damrosch, in his radio seances with music students, not only fails completely to solve this problem but, in his Dicky Dare school-reader explanations of musical works, merely further encourages his listeners in a practice they should avoid. He explains a sprightly scherzo not in terms of its form, but by sweetly explaining to his listeners to watch out for the patter of children's feet as they play ring-a-ring-a-rosy. He translates the sublimities of Bach and Beethoven in terms of Mother Goose rhymes. He invents the most puerile jingles to accompany great melodic passages. This, it is true, may have the effect of making the music more palatable to the listener at the moment; but it also teaches him the school-boy approach to music; the singling out of little pictures and stories in every composition he hears. And this is a lesson which can utterly destroy any intelligent approach to music on the part of Mr. Damrosch's young pupils—a lesson which, if they are fortunate, they can unlearn only after many years of grave effort.

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NOTES ON AN AMERICAN CELLAR-BOOK (1920-1933)

by M. LAY

NOW that all reason for keeping up my cellar has been transmuted by "Time with his stealing steps" into mere matter for Mark Sullivan to write another book about, there is a good deal of nostalgic satisfaction, not unmixed, alas!, with recurrent spells of dizziness, in turning over the yellowing leaves and faded entries of my cellar-book from those receding times, if only to discover how soft we have since become.

I began my cellar late in 1920, though there are several pages of entries in the book which date earlier—principally telephone numbers, with such comments as "Ask for Frank" or Al or Louie. After some of these first entries I find hastily scrawled marginal comments —for example, "m. e. s." which, as I recall, stood for "made everybody sick."

Literature sadly lags behind Life. No writer of the order of immortality seems ever to have noticed the solid merits of that dependable creature, White Mule, the backbone of my cellar throughout its entire period of usefulness. Vintages, it must be admitted, varied considerably. The 1919 output of the beautiful Mule Blanc district was, for example, inferior to the *cru* of 1923. The '22 vintage possessed far more scorch and twang than its sister of '27. I laid down forty dozen bottles that year. The marginal notation is "potent, take Listerine"—probably on account of the bouquet which was lingering and slightly sulphurous. It was not a delicate vintage. But who, in those days, wanted delicacy? This *cru* carried potency farther than any other—indeed, to the point of unpleasantness, according to the more delicate palates. But what were the generality of palates in those days? Little curtains to be neatly drawn while the celestial fires burned their way unhindered to the stomach. The Mule Blanc vintage did not allow liberties to be taken with it, but properly combined with extract of juniper or syrup of pepsin, what drink hit the spot quicker—or harder?

One of the soundest cordial wines of the era was Dr. Smog's Indian Root Bitters. Slightly coarse, but rich and heady, I laid down three dozen bottles of this truly splendid growth, and I have never regretted it. I was sorry, indeed, to see the last bottle go, which it did one January morning, at a man who conceived the idea of running a woodsaw under my window. Whether one preferred this tipple to the more publicized Beef, Iron and Wine Tonic was, I believe, a matter of personal taste. The principal reason for my own preference was that Doctor Smog's preparation contained eighty per cent alcohol, whereas the darker and richer compound scarcely ever ran over twenty-five per cent, and sometimes as low as twelve. Nevertheless, I cellared six dozen bottles of the Tonic, vintage of '26, and always censured myself for not laying down more. Afterwards, they made them stop selling it.*

Among the lighter table wines, the venerable Home-made Blackberry of the years '27 and '28 will perhaps never be surpassed. Well I remember its fragrance as I sat crouched in our cellar (tunneled into the earth behind the furnace, so there was not room to sit up straight), decanting it through a muslin cloth to catch the fruit-flies that had drowned themselves in it during fermenting and bottling.

A growth more dependable than Home-made Blackberry (which many times insisted on turning to vinegar, when it was useful only for salads, or for polishing copper) was Livery-Stable Port, used in gallons by members of our summer colony. It was made by an elderly groom at the renting-stables back in the woods, and the operation of selling a demijohn-full would terrify him so that he usually went away and hid in a hollow tree, sometimes for so long as two days

This abbreviated catalogue would not be complete without mention of that urbane, but not very suave concoction, Dago Red, although my cellar-book contains no reference to it. In truth, it was never a cellar wine, the liquor having a tendency, when kept over three weeks, to accumulate green mould on top and eat the corks out of the bottles. It was by no means a despicable fluid, however, and was often preserved by standing the bottles upright in the bin. It could be used either as a beverage or a liniment.

The turn of those times from early experiments to solid accomplishments is registered in my cellar-book by a series of entries made during a couple of winters in Arizona. The first of these entries read simply "Corn" and are endorsed "p. g." which meant, of course, pretty good. Later endorsements are less grudging, and run from "v. g." all the way up to "v. d. g."

Many entries are given to consignments of that hearty old liqueur, or *pousse,* which West Coast peasants then manufactured by boring through the bottom staves of a silo, draining off the grass-juices in a high state of fermentation, and distilling them for retail. They were sold under several different flavorings and trade-names. Touched up with cider, they became Martell's V. S. O. P. Brandy, and cost six dollars a quart. With creosote, burnt sugar and a little ether, they were known as White Horse or Black and White Scotch Blended Whiskey, and cost from five to nine dollars a fifth. You could buy them straight, and even, if you were a man, drink them. Those, alas!, were the days.**

Of household flavoring extracts (lemon, vanilla and the rest) my book contains no record. I never cared to cellar them, nor the various massaging-compounds containing denatured alcohol, nor yet Bay Rum and its derivatives, nor the solidified alcohol known as "canned heat". All these things had their place in the elegant living of those days, as did New England Stone Fence, or Applejack. But occasion never drew me to them, so I simply name them as exemplifying the ruggedness of the period, and pass on.

Mulled drinks of the day required both courage to drink and caution to make. Fortunate were the guests whose hostess had attained such a proficiency in the art of hospitality that she could prepare them without setting fire to her clothes, as very few of the contents of the average cellar in those days could be brought near heat without tending to burst into flames. Many a mild-mannered person, to keep abreast of the times, became a fire-eater. Who forgets Blue Blazers, poured, flaming, from goblet to goblet?

Very few brands of the wine of that era failed to mull well if they were sufficiently fireproof to mull at all. One of the credos of the times was that the hotter they were the easier they were to swallow.

Of wine-bricks, which came near the end of the manly era, I have little to say. They were pressed pellets of nasty-looking substance supposed to be grape-pulp, and they were supposed, when mixed with sugar and water, to turn themselves into wines of specified and lofty species. But I found the results weak, and the making and drinking of the stuff alike mawkish and effeminizing. Better far was it to put one's complete trust in Heinz' 57 Double-black Quick-Action Stout.

* I may be pardoned for inserting an anecdote. At a small party, I once served some of the Tonic, '29. Later, having fallen asleep, I was taken up from the lawn and carried some twelve miles away by the other guests, who had forgotten whose house they were visiting and who imagined they were taking me home. Incidents of this laughable character are, of course, no longer possible.

** I distinctly remember a friend of mine sitting before an open fire in the Fall of '25, draining off what the poets would have called a "beaker full of the warm South." This was silo juice.

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OUR LITERARY CORNER SALOONS

By HERBERT BRINKEN

CIRCULATING libraries are a distinct depression phenomenon and so are the ladies that manage them. Many of the latter were well-to-do until the Big Disappointment of 1929, after which they had to busy themselves about a source of income. They selected library work because it seemed an easy and refined way of holding body and soul together. But it took most of them only a few weeks of actual contact with the public to shatter any such illusions and to supply them with the cynical streak that they now have in common with policemen, politicians, and ladies of the chorus.

Most of these literary ladies let their own private tastes be their guide and filled their shelves with Book of the Month Club selections and other such high-toned literature. After seeing their selections gather dust, while the latest hotsy-totsy novel had a long waiting list, they finally beheld the light. Former writers for the sex magazines had seen it long ago and had begun to devote their literary efforts to the remunerative production of full-length sex novels. In recent years these literati have sought to excel each other in painstakingly minute descriptions of erotic dalliance. It takes the novice circulating-librarian several months before she is able to hand out such books to readers in their early teens without loud bellows of her outraged conscience, but brisk demand and sharp competition soon strangle the protesting little voice.

It isn't long afterward that she will have become callous enough to acquire a selection of outright erotica from her inner circle of customers. Such books as "Fanny Hill" and the unexpurgated edition of "Lady Chatterly's Lover" rent for fifty cents to a dollar a day, and constitute a nice source of income. The risk of keeping these books is relatively small. So long as they are not rented out indiscriminately or to minors, the librarian has little to fear from the law. But sad to relate, even this source of income has shrunk to a considerable degree. Legitimate semi-erotic novels, renting for about three cents a day, are now so strongly spiced that they have taken the wind out of the sails of the suppressed books.

Readers of Western and Mystery stories are the despair of the struggling lady librarian. Such customers often read a thriller a night and return the next day for another, paying only the minimum charge. Naturally, the books do not pay for themselves. Mystery readers are a peculiar lot. They have certain strongly pronounced idiosyncrasies, one of them being their reluctance to read mystery tales by female authors. This sentiment is even more strongly pronounced in the readers of Western stories. One of the currently most popular authors of the latter is a woman, but she is forced to write under a male pen name and is careful not to reveal her true sex.

A large part of the shelves will be filled with the romances of Kathleen Norris, Faith Baldwin, Ruby M. Ayres, and the like—stories of the struggles of noble women against the wiles of the male. These writers have a large following among dully married women starving for love and romance and feeling that they couldn't endure their household drudgeries and the prospect of again facing their unappetizing husbands over the dinner table if it weren't for the escape provided by and in the books of these writing girls. Such, books, accordingly, are always in hot demand and a librarian could no more afford to omit ordering the latest Norris epic than to leave her shelves empty of the latest Donald Henderson Clarke, Tiffany Thayer and Jack Woodford item.

Every library has a small percentage of readers who demand a selection of the better-class novels. But this percentage is often so minute that the acquisition of books of this kind is a poor investment for a small library. The experienced librarian therefore says that the particular book requested is in circulation at the moment and makes a pretense of adding the customer's name to the waiting list.

The rest of the shelves are filled with translations and non-fiction books. The former range all the way from the Nobel Prize Norwegian peasant sagas to Colette's lingerie delicatessen. They are seldom money-makers and are kept solely for the benefit of a few patrons.

The circulating library is a mirror which illuminatingly reflects the likes and dislikes of our book-reading population. The realistic librarian accepts this fact and fills her shelves with the goods demanded of her. There are a few idealists who stubbornly refuse to listen to reason and who persist in trying to raise the adult reading level. They seldom stay long in business and soon go down with the ship. waving a copy of Thomas Mann in one hand and a Dickens in the other.

MYSELF IN A ROCKINGCHAIR

Translated from the Saroyan

by SYLVIA MEYER

I AM myself. I am sitting in a rockingchair. It is twilight, and I have exactly one lamb chop and my rockingchair in all the world. Soon it will be supper time. I am not interested in time. And what is time? I am full of longing, and on the table by my side is an open bird cage. The lamb chop is on the oil cloth table in the kitchen. I wish to speak. I intend to speak. I am determined not to be silent. What a wonderful thing is speech. I do not believe silence is golden. And what is gold? I believe in myself. This rockingchair is nothing. Havelock Ellis might consider it something. Edna St. Vincent Millay might consider it something. Albert Einstein. But Mr. Einstein is a scientist. And what is science?

Do not misunderstand me. I am not a nihilist. I do not deny. I wish only to say that I am simply I, and I am sitting in a rockingchair, and I wish to speak. But I do not want anyone to think I am bragging. Miss Millay is all right. I am not belittling her. Let her write poetry. I could write poetry. And what is poetry? But I insist I have to be myself to be what I am. I am not trying to reform you. I do not despair. I would not have you like me. And what am I?

I am sitting in a rockingchair, and I want to speak. I say to myself, "I shall fry that lamb chop on the oilcloth table for my supper." And I laugh. It is very sad. "Nonsense," I think, "this is the beginning of wisdom." I cease rocking. I start walking up and down. Without myself I am nothing. It is still Thursday. I return to the rockingchair. I admire that chair. I have rocked in it and rocked in it, and that is why I must speak out. I who am I. I shall talk. I shall proclaim it. And that is what I started out to say. Now you have the whole story. Nothing is hidden from you. True, there is no plot. And what is plot?

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WHEN YOU CALL ME THAT, SMILE!

by GENE GOLDSMITH

IF anybody tells me again that I behave in a certain fashion because I am a member of "the post-war generation," I shall make loud and unpleasant noises. All the superficial senses in which the term has been used have rendered it quite meaningless, and hence a little nauseating. Ever since Versailles, everybody between twenty and thirty, irrespective of calibre, intelligence or individuality, has been placed in a sprawling phylum called "the post-war generation." Then, whatever wave of thought happened to be sweeping the country, "the post-war generation" of that particular year was given an arbitrary character to fit the proposed thesis. The phrase has been used for generalities far-fetched enough to compare with many of the political gems one hears during a campaign period.

During the boom years, for instance, there was a notable tendency to reform anything that seemed in any way reformable. The youngsters promised to be as effective targets for such action as the saloon had been. Like magic, type faces in hundreds of presses were set to spell out the doom of "the post-war generation"—the dizzy, disillusioned children of the war, it appeared, were deliberately exchanging wings for tails by doffing their chaperons, corsets, waltzes and violins in favor of auto rides, décolleté gowns, fox-trots and saxophones. Every medium from pulpit to newspaper "viewed with alarm" the soul-killing pace. Scott Fitzgerald gave warning to the novel reader in "This Side of Paradise," and Joan Crawford gave it to the screen-goer in filmy lingerie. Committees and campaigns were organized by the dozen to abolish low necklines, gin and petting in order to Save the American Home.

But "the post-war generation," blind and heedless youngsters that they were, didn't seem to quake very much at impending disaster. They continued to enjoy themselves in their own fashion until graduation. Then they found jobs in law offices and department stores, where they proceeded to apply nose to grindstone, having little more than next day's exam on the Seven Romantic Poets to worry about. Some of them even had the crust to get married, thereby upsetting all notions about free love and the twilight of maternity. They didn't enter the gaping jaws of Hell after all. Their more juvenile antics passed into good-natured history. Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn proved themselves capable of growing up whether in the shadow of Gettysburg or Château Thierry, despite all Victorian or modern generalities to the contrary.

With the Depression, the country had something more to worry about than Saturday night amusements. Like the boy who has eaten too much cake, America was vowing never again to indulge in such sweetmeats as quick money schemes. Seriousness and conservatism became the order of the day. And the label "post-war generation," useless in its original sense, must promptly be used to convey a new principle. The charcoal sketch of Joe College, hat askew, with his inscription-covered lizzie and gin bottle, gave way to the marble statue of Joe Grind, bespectacled, serious, laden with books, and discussing economic determinism with his professor.

But this new dogma was possibly a little more out of kilter than the preceding one had been. In 1932, one of the blackest years, my own Alma Mater had one of the best riots in its history; a fraternity house was forbidden to hold dances because of a wholesale violation of chaperon rules; and the President told us quite frankly in chapel that the scholastic standing was "not all that it might be." Alcohol flowed just as freely on any campus that I visited as on our own; the more spicy publications were as much in demand as ever. There was, of course, a little more competition for scholarship grades, and there were, further, the usual isolated examples of common-sense industry and maturity, but one saw little that promised to transform the campus into a Puritan training-ground for the future.

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Today, having dropped from the balloon to earth, rubbed its shins and shaken itself back to a semi-conscious state, the country is gazing at its new surroundings with the ambition to adapt itself accordingly. Naturally enough, one hears more talk than ever before of dealing with all the problems that accompany world economic unrest, such as war, social conditions, and unemployment. In view of what has gone before, it follows just as logically that "the post-war generation" should be tagged with a brand-new illogical status. It is now the saving hope of society. People gush about eager youth, ready to throw all its enthusiastic energy, all its wisdom gathered from mistakes of its sires, into the struggle to set the world right. A group of college boys, inspired by the intellectual flush of the moment, declare they're not going to go to war, and the pacifist societies emit loud cheers. Some well-meaning girls from Smith or Wellesley or Vassar visit a few jails, maternity wards or insane asylums in connection with their Sociology Major, and various optimistic souls are sure to say that, with all this interest, conditions can't help changing.

Horse feathers—extra large size. For every pacifist in college there is a lad proud in his Sam Browne belt as he struts to R.O.T.C. practice; and at least two more brave youths who argue ruggedly: "If some one punches me in the nose, do you mean to say I won't hit him back?" And for every embryonic feminine sociologist, there is a girl who buries herself in Shakespeare, Swiss Government, or Comparative Anatomy, so that, hearing of a leprosy epidemic in a tenement house district, her reaction will be a few sympathetic clucks and a change of subject. As for the unbelievably large group of collegians who care particularly about nothing at all, we gladly take leave of the subject. The comparative alertness of European and American students has been commented upon sufficiently in the past.

There are probably young people in our midst today who will lend powerful arms to worth-while movements. Perhaps there are more of these than there ever were before. But calmly to talk about "the post-war generation" *in toto* as the New Messiah is to build castles in the air. Some day, all may be like the few who show cause for such hopes; but now they live, for the most part, to assure themselves of having "the happiest years of their life."

This insistence to label us with fads in keeping with the whimsy of the moment is beyond me. We youngsters constitute just as heterogeneous a world as any other. So, if "post-war generation" is used for anything other than a vague chronological category, thumb your nose, tongue your cheek, eye your neighbor—but don't believe what you hear.

BOYD DIGESTS THE BOOKS

"THE Smart Set Anthology." (*Burton Rascoe and Groff Conklin.*) New York: Reynal and Hitchcock. $3.50—A proof that it is possible to bring out an interesting magazine without recourse to dialectical materialism is furnished for the edification of the present lost literary generation by the editors of this anthology. They have taken the *Smart Set* from the beginning of its career under Wright down to the end of the editorship of Mencken and Nathan, and selected over a hundred contributions by the heretics of that time, the writers who frightened all the other American magazine editors. To call the roll of these names is to realize that a great blight has fallen over American literature today and that the American literary Renaissance is over. Burton Rascoe writes an excellent, informative history of the *Smart Set* by way of an introduction, which should take its place as an illuminating chapter in contemporary American literary history. It throws a sad light on the inexplicable twists and quirks of human destiny.

"The Georgian Scene." (*Frank Swinnerton.*) New York: Farrar & Rinehart. $3.50—Mr. Swinnerton's "literary panorama" covers approximately the same period as the previous volume and presents for England a spectacle somewhat analogous. From his comment and criticism and his dexterous narrative the reader derives an impression of a great flowering of talent, of a twenty-five year period of intense intellectual activity, which has no equivalent today. There appears to be a tendency on the part of those who had no first-hand knowledge of the time to describe these writers as "bankrupt," apparently because Marx was not their obsession. But there is not a panacea, from Marxianism to Distributivism, which was not advocated by some group or other of Mr. Swinnerton's Georgians. If the latter were bankrupt, then their successors have set up shop with a vast amount of bankrupt stock.

"Author Hunting." (*Grant Richards.*) New York: Coward-McCann. $3.50—Here is still another work to exasperate the dialectical materialists. The ever genial Grant Richards tells the story of his first ventures as a publisher, just at the turn of the century, when he had the acumen to persuade Bernard Shaw to collect his plays for the first time into the two volumes known as "Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant." The correspondence concerning this and other early Shaviana is vastly amusing and shows the eternal G. B. S. in the strange light of an expert printer, binder, and accountant. The story of Dreiser's "A Traveller at Forty" is also related from the publisher's, as distinct from the author's, point of view. But for Richards, his recalcitrant author would have perished on the *Titanic*. In this volume, as in Swinnerton's, one catches again glimpses of a world of gay adventure, of intellectual disinterestedness, of brave experiment. Shaw contends that Grant Richards fell in love with literature, a fatal proceeding for a publisher but, as he turns over the brilliant list of his authors and recalls the fun of it all, Richards evidently has no regrets, but smiles charmingly as he adjusts his monocle.

"Experiment in Autobiography." (*H. G. Wells.*) New York: The Macmillan Company. $4.00—Even those who decided long since that Wells was dead should read this engaging story of one man's life. The author seems to be quite frank about himself and maintains a discreet silence only where complete candor would be necessary and would injure living persons. Wells presents a little problem, which he naturaly cannot solve. A man of great talent and extraordinary industry and vitality, his life may be said to have been consecrated to developing in himself and others their finest powers and ideals. Yet, he succeeded neither with marriage nor friendship, in the sense that no human tie ever seems to have bound him very closely. One closes the book with the feeling that he is an interesting but not very attractive personality, incurably naïve in his endless enthusiasms, but impressed fundamentally only by success. An Arnold Bennett who envied the real Bennett's geniality and capacity for knowing his way about.

"Prelude to the Past." (*R. G.*) New York: William Morrow & Company. $3.00—The heroine of the famous Ullstein affair, who prefers to be called by her maidenly initials, here essays to tell all, and her "frankness" has been duly cheered. Its quality may be judged by such wisdom as this: "In New York you are at home as soon as and as long as you have a job. In Paris you are at home as soon as and as long as you have a lover." Judging solely by the narrative as a whole, R. G. has spent most of her life living up to this theory, whether in Paris or not. The research unmagnificent, may I say, echoing Wells?

"Windfalls." (*Sean O'Casey.*) New York: The Macmillan Company. $1.75—The stories, poems and plays here collected from the author's miscellanea will hardly send new readers to "Within the Gates" or "The Plough and the Stars," but admirers of those masterpieces cannot but read them with sympathy and interest. "Fall in a Gentle Wind," "The Star-Jazzer" and "The Job" are the outstanding pieces, informed with those qualities which have made O'Casey's reputation. The two one-acters are perfect Abbey curtain-raisers.

"The Cingalese Prince." (*Brooks Atkinson.*) New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. $2.50—From Broadway first nights to a freighter, en route for Yokohama, Hongkong, Cebu, Macassar, Sourabaya, Singapore and other remote places, is a far cry. But Mr. Atkinson undertook the trip joyfully, enjoyed it all, and communicates much of his enjoyment and much of himself to the reader, as he recounts the adventures of his soul, if not amongst masterpieces, then amongst various unusual manifestations of God's handiwork—not the least of these being the British, whom this New Englander analyzes with bitter detachment. Despite the blurb, this is not a rehash of Maugham or Conrad, but a pungent, thoughtful record by an independent traveler.

"Why Not Try God?" (*Mary Pickford.*) New York: H. C. Kinsey & Company. $1.00—After all the authoress has been through, there seems to be no alternative.

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LIGHTS OUT FOR "PRETTY BOY" FLOYD

by HAROLD PREECE

NO particular glamour attaches to the reputations of the constables who dispatched "Pretty Boy" Floyd into Kingdom Come. Had the late Mr. Floyd been content to rest on his own laurels, instead of attempting to emulate Tom Mix by shooting up a sleepy Ohio village, the chances are that he would have eventually retired with age and a substantial amount of cash. But this lurid escapade, so startlingly different from the conduct of an ordinary yegg, proved the undoing of both Mr. Floyd and his able colleague, Mr. Adam Richetti. Even so, the constables were only able to pot the rash Oklahoman in the back as, already wounded, he scurried for safety across the open country.

Before the writers for the detective story penny-dreadfuls get in their dirty work, before the Sunday School quarterlies begin their horrendous moralizings about a character who was both a bandit and a gentleman, I would assume the rôle of devil's advocate. It is true that my acquaintance with the deceased was so slight as to be hardly worth mentioning. I was seated in a hamburger joint near my moldering domicile when Mr. Floyd and a pal dropped in to sate their hunger. The proprietor, recognizing the Sallisaw Dick Turpin, proceeded to fetch out the best in the larder for his distinguished patrons. I kept my seat and unobtrusively watched the pair masticate their steaks. Knowing Mr. Floyd's prejudice regarding publicity, I made no play for an interview. For once, I was glad that it was beyond the power of a bumptious City Editor to hand me assignments.

"Pretty Boy" Floyd was the last of the classic road agents. He was intrepid, daring; he robbed the rich and gave to the poor; he had a way with the women, particularly those who ordinarily exacted monetary compensation for the bequeathal of their charms. One found in his personality a certain verve which was lacking in his rival contemporaries. Contrast the dashing Mr. Floyd, for instance, with a blustering blackguard like Mr. John Dillinger or a wizened cut-throat like Mr. "Legs" Diamond. I go further in my elegy and assert that, by comparison, Mr. Al Capone and his associated banditti are so much alley-scum. Mr. Floyd perfected the art of thievery to an unprecedented magnitude; and the peccadilloes of a first-rate artist are always preferable to the rabbit-like decorum of mankind at large.

True, Mr. Floyd was obliged to make various concessions to modernity. His palfrey moved on wheels instead of hooves. The gentleman-outlaw affected Kuppenheimer breeks and Florsheim brogans rather than the traditional accoutrements of his profession. In a sense, Mr. Floyd's sartorial fastidiousness complimented the American ego. Is it not proverbial that one can always be clean and neat, whatever one's calling?

I can well imagine that Mr. Floyd found those long months of hiding in the Cookson hills to be monotonous. Out of sheer ennui, he finally burglarized his home-town bank. No great man can endure his boyhood environment, in spite of the "Home Sweet Home" falsehood concocted by that dormouse of American poets, Mr. John Howard Payne. The social life of the Cookson hills is somewhat narrowly restricted to unpleasant intimacy with gallused moonshiners and decaying Cherokee sagamores. I can testify from personal experience that the red-eye made "down on the crick" would afflict Bacchus himself with the D. T.'s. It is even worse than the stuff distilled in the neighboring Arkansas Ouachitas, which is saying a lot. Undoubtedly, the prospect of spending a winter in this houn'-dawg paradise must have irked Mr. Floyd's genius, hence that fatal sashay into Ohio.

Immediately, the Federal men began a renewed attempt to apprehend Pretty Boy for the Kansas City police massacre. Grave doubts exist regarding the participation of Mr. Floyd in this protracted and somewhat gory adventure. But anyone who has resided within the precincts of Missouri knows that the Kansas City gendarmerie are the greasiest aggregation of nit-wits ever to masquerade in police uniforms. I have seen Kansas City cops beat pallid dope-heads from the North End into insensibility while permitting the offspring of the hog-packers to cavort through the streets at sixty miles an hour.

Pretty Boy died without benefit of parson or physician, a thoroughly unrepentant sinner who cursed his slayers to the last gasp. This doesn't mean that the Oklahoma bad man will get any sympathy from our more impassioned atheists. These militant blasphemers had their prejudices rubbed when Mr. Floyd's young son was inducted into the First Baptist Church, of Fort Worth, Texas. I think that our Ingersolls in knee-pants entirely missed the point. Dr. J. Frank Norris, pastor of the First Baptist Church, is a gun-totin' son-of-a-gun with some swell shooting to his credit. The baptism of young Jack Dempsey Floyd was a tribute from one strong man to another strong man, all the camouflage of eccleciasticism aside. If the kid had to be saved, then, by God, his parents were going to have him saved by a sky-pilot quick on the draw!

The death of Pretty Boy marks the final eclipse of the frontier. In those hectic days before the advent of oil wells and barbed-wire fences, his deeds would have been compiled into a saga inspiring young desperadoes from San Antonio to Butte. Mexican sheep-herders would have recounted his escapades on their mandolins after the flocks had been made secure from marauding wolves. Had he been captured, he would have been accorded the accolade of hanging from a mesquite tree instead of an ignominious death from behind.

Fame, so ephemeral nowadays, will not long adorn the memory of a man who, within his limits, possessed courage and integrity. One of MacFadden's hacks will be the richer for the bandit's untimely end; the city marshal of East Liverpool, Ohio, will bask in reflected and somewhat dubious glory. Presently, some awful imitator of Jimmie Rogers will compose a tuneless ballad entitled "The Death of Pretty Boy Floyd." It will be a sorry requiem for the last genuine outlaw of the West.

AIR

by GERRY ALLARD
Editor, The Fighting Miner

THE seventy-two-year-old Bear Creek mine whistle moans plaintively for the second time this morning, resounding monotonously in every nook and corner of regimented company shacks. It is 5:30 a. m. In iron-stead beds, working stiffs are aroused by the mine whistle—or the signal is relayed by the call of grouchy housewives who are already meddling around sooty cook stoves.

Shack number 17 is the home of Old Tim, known as Timothy P. Murphy to the company rent collector. With a grunt, several stretches, the aged miner lies with one eye half cocked over the sweaty covers. He steals away minutes that seem seconds; very confidentially he wishes the mine wasn't working today. Directly he hears the fat-back lively crackling on the stove, with final effort he stumbles from his bed, drags himself into pit clothes, slaps on his boots, gobbles his morning morsel, mechanically kisses the old woman and, presently, is on his way to the mine which lies three-quarters of a mile down the valley.

It's one hell of a day. The valley is enveloped in a thin but steady drizzle of moisture. It is mid-winter and the mornings are short of sunshine but long with pitch blackness. The slushing sound of boots in the black gumbo seems to keep time with the puffing wheezes of the steam boiler.

"No wonder the old woman is grouchy this morning," Old Tim thinks to himself. "Her rheumatism must be abotherin' her."

More boots are joining the intermingling paths leading to

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the shaft. Here and there are carbide lamps flickering their eerie light against the falling rain and an occasional gush of wind. Several lamps go out. The miners strike their flints, relighting the extinguished lamps. More frequent than the lamps going out are the respiratory explosions and intervening fits of coughing that invariably clutch the breathing of hurrying coal diggers. The miners are already making coal . . . coughing it out of their lungs in pussy, black clods which fall heavily to the ground.

Old Tim had had more difficulty with his breathing the last few days than ever. The dampness of the atmosphere, no doubt, aggravated his case of miners' consumption. Finally he was compelled to rest for several minutes to regain his normal breathing.

"It's Old Tim," said one passing miner to others. "Another spit and he's a goner, shure nuff!"

Old Tim knew that what the miner said was true; he took the remark good-naturedly. Like an articulate person who writes his autobiography when he is dead, if not physically, at least spiritually, Old Tim retraced the high-lights of his spasm through some sixty-six years of time.

Fifty-three years of his life he had spent in the Old Bear Creek mine—quite an achievement for a member of a section of the population who wander for comfort, which to the ordinary coal miner means a "room" without horse-backs, without nigger-heads, a good top, no pools of black murky water, plenty of good air, and a union. But this is asking something almost impossible, at least, that is what the mine bosses say. Old Tim's father had also worked in the same shaft. As a matter of fact it was grandpa Murphy who took Timothy by the hand and lead him into the mine more than a half a century ago. Old Tim's boys were working in the mines, too; the fourth generation were already past the ordinary age when young trapper boys start to work, but this generation was snubbed at by the "depression" with its long queues of jobless workers. Probably not ungenerously.

As these thoughts raced through Old Tim's mind he was already down some four hundred feet below the surface, sitting in the "mantrap" which daily takes the miners some three miles from the "bottom" to the "face."

Coming out of their working places scores of miners stopped at the "parting" to place their orders for props, rails, a clean-up man, etc. Practically everyone raised particular hell about the air shortage in the third west off the fifteenth north entries.

"I'll see about it," replied the assistant mine manager, in the mechanical way he answered all complaints.

"See about it, hell!" exploded one of the younger diggers.

The mine manager turned his back and walked away.

"You'd think that we were asking that possum-faced sonofabitch for a million dollars when you ask for a brattice to boost some of their goddamned stinky air into the rooms."

The straight-from-the-shoulder punch pricked the assistant boss. He came back toward the men and said: "We have repeatedly told you fellas that when there isn't enough air to come out. That's the standing order of this company."

"Don't you think we know that?" quickly retorted the aroused militant. "Sure, we can come out. We can stay home, too. We can walk the streets, too. Yes, we can even starve!"

The company official walked out of sight this time. Old Tim had heard the entire conversation. His heart leaped affectionately for the young miner who threatened a revolt against the crime of making human beings work in black damp. On their way out the congregated diggers jabbered away, agreeing with the position taken by their youthful fellow worker.

"You mugs are all alike," he shot at his own men. "Why don't you spill your guts to the boss? Not here! If you'd stand on your hind legs like men, we'd have some air in this damn mine."

Weeks rolled by and coal miners kept reporting that in some sections the air was so light that even a carbide lamp wouldn't burn for lack of oxygen. Each time the promise of "I'll see about it" was the only reply.

It was one day when the mine whistle moaned away at 5:30 a.m. and again the miners went through the routine of cocking one eye over the bed covers half unconsciously, stealing minutes, stumbling out of bed, putting on their pit clothes, eating their morsel, kissing the old woman, and making their way to work.

Old Tim had exerted every effort to make the trip to the mine. His breathing was more difficult. Usually with the clearing up of the weather he regained some vitality, but not this morning.. He listened to the roar of the whirling fan at the air shaft which forced air from the surface through myriads of old working places, and through miles of entries and then back through the main shaft. As he prepared to enter the cage for the descent the smelly, soured air excreting from the main shaft nearly overcame him. He managed to get to the waiting mantrap. After thirty minutes of rough riding he made his way slowly to his working place. Resting for several minutes, he removed his overclothing and prepared for the day's work.

While making his way down the wooden track leading to the "face," flanked on both sides by gob and slag, he began to feel weaker than ever. Suddenly, his carbide lamp went out in an unusual way. He knew by that signal that he was trapped in black damp. His only recourse was to walk back to the entry, but he was already dizzy from lack of oxygen and he reeled—he fell to his knees and tried to shake his head clear. Old Tim tried to yell for succor, but he discovered that he had lost the power of even a dying man. His heart pounded heavily and faster. His lungs burned. In a minute he was unconscious, and in a few following seconds he lived no more.

The mule driver found Old Tim's body huddled on its sides. Gnarled fingers, tightly clutched about the neck, gave evidence of the frantic combat the aged miner had waged against the deadly black damp.

The news is flashed to the main sections of the mine by telephones, and then by the grapevine system to every man. "All Over! Man Dead!" becomes the repeated slogan that brings all of Old Tim's fellow-workers to the surface. Amidst curses for the mine bosses and sympathy for their fallen brother, the miners spill their guts, but to return the following day.

The company sends a nice appropriate card of condolence to the bereaved family; it's their traditional substitute for good air and old age pensions.

In the county courthouse is the coroner's office. In the office are long, dusty rows of files. Under the heading of "M" is added a new sheet with the following:

Murphy, Timothy Patrick, Aged 66; *Born: Mulberry, Maryland; Cause of Death: HEART FAILURE.*

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THE BOY WHO WON THE PULITZER PRIZE

by WOLFE KAUFMAN

HE was a nice kid who wanted to write novels. Like most Jewish boys of poor parents in these glorified days and in this glorified world, he had been treated to a college education which his parents could not afford and which accomplished very little for him. After he had gone to college for about two years his father and mother realized that he didn't want to be either a doctor or a lawyer but just wanted to learn how to write novels, which proved he was crazy, so they told him to quit and he didn't want to and they stopped giving him money, which made him quit.

He didn't like it much and he resented it somewhat but he thought what the hell, he could learn how to write while starving in New York and be getting actual experience at the same time. Maybe, he thought, that might even be better and he could be bitter about life which would make him a better novelist, because all the best novelists, like Dreiser and Dostoevsky and Zola, were bitter about life.

So he went around and told people about how he wanted to be a great novelist and how he was bitter and how he was suffering. And, generally, all that would lead directly up to a touch but when it came to that stage he never could go through with it.

I remember once, when I first met him, he told me a long ring-around-the-rosy about how he was living with his parents way up on 85th Street but he would walk all the way down to the Village because he wanted to get away from the squalor of his home but he couldn't even afford the subway fare and now that he had come all the way down he didn't know when he would get strength enough to walk all the way back and he should go back because he had some ideas about his book which he was writing and which he wanted to get back to work on. I must have been pretty dumb, too. I didn't get the point and I didn't offer him a nickel for car-fare or a quarter or, in fact, any money. I just talked to him about what kind of a book he was writing.

It went on like that for a couple of years and I didn't pay much attention to him because he was really a nice boy but ineffectual and he always had a pleasant sticky kind of a smile that was more an S.O.S. of helplessness than anything. I liked him but I didn't bother about him.

Then he came over to my house one day. He was all excited, flushed. I don't know where he got my address, but there he was. He had just finished his novel, he said, and he wanted me to read it.

"Please read it, will you?" he said. "Please read it and give me your candid opinion."

Well, I was pretty busy but not as busy as I made out and I didn't want to offend the guy and what the hell can you say to a fellow like that at a time like that, anyway? So I said, well, all right, I would read it.

I read it. It stank.

When I saw him again, I told him.

"It stinks," I said.

And then that kind of puzzled helpless baby look came into his eyes—I told you he had blue eyes, didn't I? Milky blue eyes—and I softened up.

"There's a good idea there," I said, "and your general plan of attack is good," I said, "but I don't think you work it out very well."

I looked around for somebody or something to help me, but there wasn't anything or anybody.

"I think you can make something out of this," I said, "but it needs some work."

"Oh, well," he said, "that's all right, then. Because this is only the first draft. I know I've got a lot to do to it yet, but I just wondered about how it hit you generally."

"Yeah," I said, "the idea's all right enough, but you'll have to do some work on it."

Later I was mad at myself because I'm no great shakes at telling the truth and I haven't got any scruples or conscience or anything like that but why encourage a jackass to waste paper and annoy people with lousy crap like the thing he had shown me?

II

I'll make the thing short for you. It was worked on and worked on and rewritten and rewritten and still it was lousy. Then it began going the rounds of the publishers and it began coming back. He had quite a stack of rejection slips by the time it was first accepted.

I guess maybe Max was almost as astonished as I was when it was accepted, although he didn't let on like it was any kind of surprise (and I still think it must have been). I was plumb amazed. The publisher wasn't so much of a much, one who had once been a top-notcher but was now on the skates and sliding rapidly.

He called him in and said he'd take the book, and even gave him a couple hundred dollars advance, only he wanted him to rewrite it. He told him to take the nice girl character and turn her into a prostitute and take the villain and turn him into a sap and to drop the happy ending and make it a double tragedy and he asked him to slap morality on thick throughout the book.

Max came to see me about that. He was worried about it. He wanted to know what about it.

"Do you think I ought to proselyte myself like that?" he asked me.

"Prostitute is the word you mean," I said, "and why not?"

(That's funny, too, because he had the right word and I corrected him and made him swallow the wrong one by sheer bull and he didn't object for a second, which gives you another insight on what I mean when I refer to him as a sweet little *nebish* in those days.)

Anyway, I convinced him that what the hell, if the publisher had faith in him and had ideas on the book and suggested how to rewrite it and had the book's interests at heart that much, and with all the experience that publishers had, why who was he, a little nincompoop beginner in the writing racket, to tell the publisher any different?

He agreed to do what the publisher had told him to do, but he wasn't too sure.

"Maybe I should ask somebody else," he said. "You newspaper guys are too cynical."

"Experienced, not cynical," I told him, and he was sucker enough to fall for that, too.

He worked hard on the changes suggested, rewrote the book completely and made a complete smear of it. After a couple of months of fussing around the publisher gave it up, released the book and Shapiro began peddling it elsewhere.

I saw him about that time and his equanimity is the thing I remember. Everything was swell. He didn't think much of that publisher anyway. He had the money and now he would sell it again elsewhere and be paid two advances for it. What a break!

And he did, too. He sold it a second time to MacGowans. MacGowans, of course, publish a strange type of cheap junk that nobody else would want and which doesn't sell much outside of renting libraries but pretty well there. I wondered vaguely why they took Shapiro's book, which wasn't that way at all, but then I remembered that he had submitted it as fixed up by the other publisher, with the prostie and the sap.

After MacGowans had it for a while they asked the kid to

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fix it a little and their idea of fixing it up a little was to move the lady right into a houseful of sisters of her ilk and change the man into a complete cad who lives on her meagre earnings.

Shapiro fixed it, refixed it, and rehashed it, and eventually got the book back to do with as he pleased.

Still he was optimistic. Still he hoped. Still he planned. The milk was a bit more evident in his eyes than the blue and the helplessness a bit more marked but he didn't give up. I began admiring his determinedness.

He had a hard time selling it after that, but eventually he sold it a third time. This time it was an up and coming young publishing house the name of which I don't want to mention because they really brought the book out and I would like it to be a secret who the kid really is. They called Shapiro in and asked him if he would mind doing some rewriting and he said no, so they gave him an advance, his third, and asked him to brighten the book. Lighten it up. Make it funnier.

He said he'd try.

Poor kid couldn't write humor. He struggled with it and asked me for help and I couldn't give it to him, or wouldn't, and he struggled some more. But you've got the idea by this time that he was a diligent and conscientious worker. He continued trying and finally finished what he thought was a complete job.

"It's broad farce," he told me. "Maybe I shouldn't have done it. I started out to write a tragedy and now it's broad farce and the characters are changed around and the situations aren't the same. But I have to do what my publisher wants me to do, don't I?"

I told him yeah but I didn't want to read his manuscript.

III

The book was published. It took some months to publish because I later heard that his publishers, despairing of having Maxie write comedy, had fixed it up themselves. They had rewritten most of it and fixed it here and there. And then they lost courage and cut most of the jokes out and just brought it out as is.

And one of those things happened that make book publishing the nicest gambling racket next to Monte Carlo in the world. It clicked. The boys on the papers thought it was satire and they were at the particular point of the year when they wanted satire and they gave it swell notices. What I think really happened is that the public was becoming pretty annoyed with trashy sex novels and this was called a satire on one and nobody knows what satire is anyway but everyone likes to read satire when they know ahead of time that it's satire, so it clicked.

It sold and went into about eight editions in no time and the British rights were disposed of and the Polish rights were disposed of and the Hungarian rights, and in fact all rights were eventually disposed of including the Scandinavian, although in Germany it was banned by Hitler because it "tended to handle disrespectfully the moral lives of modern day humans." Maybe Maxie's name had something to do with it, too.

Max Shapiro became quite a personage and we sat down one day to eat a cornbeef sandwich, which I let him pay for, and counted up how much money he would make on the book and it seemed as though it might very well be as much as $35,000 and he seemed more dazed than ever and more helpless than ever, but sort of triumphant, too.

"I knew my book would sell if the publishers only gave it a chance," he said. "I knew it would."

I asked for another glass of tea.

Then he sold the picture rights. Paramount wanted it and Metro heard that they wanted it so they put in a higher bid and it finally went for $50,000, and in the meantime three more editions of the book were struck off and sold and Shapiro made four more speeches at different kinds of women's clubs and societies.

It went on and on and I met him one day when he was getting ready to sail to Europe for a trip and he said, "Why don't you come along and be my guest?"

I said no thanks I was pretty busy and gave him some good advice about saving his money.

"Oh, I know," he said. "I'm not going screwy. This is good luck and I'll probably get about $100,000 out of it but I'll need it all because now I must take my time with my next book and be sure it's up to the standard. After all, I can't take a chance any more on writing anything that doesn't reach my mark. So it may be several years before my next book is finished but I intend to take it easy on money-spending until then. You don't need to worry about me on that score."

He was wearing a reddish-brown checked suit and there was a tiny feather in his hat and he had a shillelah sort of stick with a heavy, big knob of some kind of stone.

"You like this stick?" he asked me. "It's real amber. I got it at a bargain."

I didn't see him then for a long time, and in fact haven't seen him at all since.

But yesterday the Pulitzer prizes were announced and Max won the novel award. At the dinner at which the awards were made public they read a long cablegram from him saying how sorry he was he couldn't be there in person to tell them all how deeply grateful he was at the signal honor and so forth and so forth.

So Max Shapiro won the Pulitzer prize and I can now go around puffing out my chest and telling people how lucky I am. I am a personal friend of the guy that won the great Pulitzer prize.

THE ANCESTRY OF THE THRILLER

by RICHARD COSMUS

THE reactions of our literary-tea-goers to that vulgar genre, the mystery thriller, pirouette from Lofty Disdain to Ardent Enthusiasm with sprightly grace. Yet in each attitude they seem to betray a slight self-consciousness.

Their disdain recalls those school-boy critics who passed the test in Literature II and so feel qualified to damn in public the "Startling Stories" which they devour behind their geographies. Their enthusiasm somehow suggests the Salvation Army soul-savers who interlard their sermons with coarse humor to prove that they, too—despite their awful piety—have real red blood in their veins.

Just now this critical chorus appears about to rise from the symbolic altar—where salaaming toward the Left Bank it had been burning incense to the Dada-ists—to assume the more nearly native posture of Rabelaisian rooters for thin men and for postmen who always ring twice. It seems a fit time to remind it that the thriller holds an honorable place in the history of English letters.

Between the era of the melancholic bards, Gray, Blair, Young and Wharton, and the great romantics of the early eighteen hundreds, there stretched a long half-century of common sense. Throughout this age of reason, Dr. Samuel Johnson ruled his school of authors —a caustic literary headmaster who left the imprint of his neat, moral mind on the work of all his disciples and so on most British writing of his time.

But mighty as he was, not even Johnson was omnipotent. There were a few truants from his school, and notorious among them were the tellers of "tales of terror and wonder", the thrillers of the day. It is this handful of common souls, little known today, that I would have our wan critics of the mystery momentarily consider.

Their absorption with the supernatural was in itself, of course, of no particular significance. The antics of gods and ghosts permeate all literature, either as the principle ingredients of tragedy or as convenient solvents for precipitate and unruly plots. It is important,

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however, that the eighteenth century romancers rallied their spooks in that most sinister of rendezvous; a ruined castle perched atop a rocky crag and flanked by woods and graveyards. For such scenes—or rather the impress of such scenes on richer minds—were one day to call to new life the great Lochinvar and Manfred.

Let me make it clear that I hold no brief for the Gothic romancers as literary discoverers of these settings. They had been used before. But always before they had been incidental to some high artistic argument. The importance of the thriller-writers, Walpole, Reeve, Radcliffe and Lewis, is that with sure knowledge of the vulgar taste they dragged their settings out of the frigid pages of Gray, Young and Wharton, mixed them up, stirred in a lot of mystery and a few cardboard characters, and served the product hot.

To say that the public liked it would be ridiculous. As well say that "Abie's Irish Rose" had a moderate success. Walpole's "Castle of Otranto" ran through edition after edition, as did Clara Reeve's "Old English Baron"—the same story in "modern dress". Around these first two Gothic romances, in fact there ranged a low-class literary war, with undiscerning boosters of both comparing their authors to the great Shakespeare himself. And all this during the years when the things that "really mattered" were "The Deserted Village", "The Vicar of Wakefield" and "The Rivals".

Popular craving for thrillers was not satiated by Reeve and Walpole. The Chatterton controversy gave it a sharper edge and made it felt to some extent even by the intellectual heavy-weights. The great Johnson, who had never missed a chance to swing his verbal bludgeon at MacPherson's "Ossian", and thought of romance only that it produced "an unsettled turn of mind", finally remarked of Chatterton: "He is the most extraordinary young man that ever encountered my knowledge."

To appease the clamoring public, Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, "Salvator Rosa of English literature", and most prolific of the romancers, published half a dozen tomes. The best of these, "The Mysteries of Udolpho", lashed the critics into frenzied superlatives, curiously enough, for her descriptions of European landscapes, which were considered particularly felicitous as it was known that the lady had never seen the places she wrote about. Even today so luscious a literary authority as Governor Wilbur Cross of Connecticut admits that in certain respects Mrs. Radcliffe was equalled only by Chateaubriand.

To contemporary readers it must have seemed that with Radcliffe the thriller-romance had reached the zenith of its fame. But, if so, they reckoned without "Monk" Lewis. This young man, really Matthew Gregory Lewis but nicknamed "Monk" after the hero of his masterpiece, decided to write a thriller to end thrillers. And he nearly succeeded.

He took all the elements of the tales of his predecessors—castles, cliffs, graves and portents. He lifted incidents bodily from Schiller, Cervantes and Diderot. He added rape, incest, blasphemy, and a few dashes of moral. He was lucky. "The Monk" was banned. Overnight, Lewis became the "most admired and abused of living writers". Byron hailed him as "wonder-working" Lewis. Scott dined with him and wrote home of the "greatest honor" in his life. "Monk" became the friend of princes and dukes, and more important, of Shelley, Keats and Byron.

With his help the vulgar thriller was able to cast off the overbearing weight of the Johnsonian utilitarianism and perform at last its real function. To a rising school of romantics it offered, ready-to-hand and vastly popular, the most effective kind of raw material. This material was only too quickly used, as see "The Eve of St. Agnes", "The Tragedy of the Cenci", and "The Giaour".

And so let the literary-tea-goers sneer not at the thriller, but ponder this relation: As "The Monk" was to "The Giaour", so "The Thin Man" will be to What? There may yet be written the epic of the cop.

PROFESSORS' WIVES

by ONE OF THEM

BEFORE discussing my fellow-members of the academic wifehood, I feel it only fair to present my credentials. I have been one of them for eight years. Likewise I was born with a talent for being one, *à priori*. This point of prenatal preparation I shall hope to make clear during the course of my discussion. Besides being a professor's wife myself, I was reared in a college town and associated from earliest memory with the offspring of professors' wives. Do not these qualifications fit me admirably for an analysis of my sisterhood? I have in preparation a manual on "The Care and Feeding of Professors' Wives." This is a chapter from that work.

The first curious fact about professors' wives is their husbands. Why do intelligent women elect to marry professors? This subject requires careful thought. I feel a slight delicacy in approaching the matter when I consider that my own husband might one day be informed of this analysis of mine. The truth is that, contrary to popular tradition, professors are not the intellectual giants they are reputed to be. They are, in fact, very low in the scale of intelligence. I should not put them quite in the class with first degree morons, but somewhere in the scale between bankers and politicians.

Likewise, they are very lazy as a group. The legendary figure of the absent-minded professor who is so immersed in his studies that he forgets his lunch always excites my utmost mirth. I never yet knew a professor immersed in any kind of study, and I never knew one who didn't make a home-run sprint when the dinner-bell rang. Occasionally one of them does dash off a little book of essays or compile a little bibliography for a reluctant new course; but for the most part professors are content to draw the curtains of their early study about them and lie down to pleasant dreams. Instead of having to con the Encyclopædia Britannica or *Englische Studien* to keep up with her husband's mental activities, the average professor's wife must learn how to play a good game of golf and study how to get the bottom crust of a green apple pie as crisp as the top crust. Why then should intellectual women waste their mental sweetness on a desert of college professors? The answer to this will be arrived at by further discussion of the wives themselves.

The second outstanding peculiarity of professors' wives is their offspring. The guileless outsider would naturally suppose that the children of academic women were from earliest infancy given a book to prod their brains toward a future of fierce mental activity. I ask you, however, to consider with me the offspring of the wives of some of my husband's colleagues. There were four of us drinking tea together recently, each having the modern allotment of two descendants or a single fine achievement of one priceless pearl. Roundly speaking, there were six children belonging to the group. I will enumerate their proposed futures as outlined for them by their mothers: one tap-dancer, one business secretary, two automobile salesmen, one golf pro, and one millionaire's wife. Observe please that there is to be no intellectual nonsense in the houses that these Jacks and Jills shall build. Why do intellectual women wish non-intellectual careers for their children? I again ask you to wait for an answer.

The next phenomenon of academic wives is their social aspirations. I early began to wonder why in an uncommercial atmosphere, on comparatively low salaries, there should be so much academic attention paid to possession of automobiles (frequently unpaid for), to dancing lessons for the daughters, to houses in a "good part of town"; in short to all the details of keeping up with the non-academic Joneses. Whisper the answer low. This is a dark secret of the collegiate world. Professors' wives are frequently uncertain of their social standing. I walk upon eggshells in analyzing this subject. To do so I must classify professors' wives into certain broad groupings. The first group is the smallest: Professors' Wives Who Were Born

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"Aristocratic." Next comes the largest class: Professors' Wives Who Achieved "Aristocracy" by Marrying Professors. And lastly: Professors' Wives Who Are Not Yet Sure That They Have Had "Aristocracy" Thrust upon Them by Marrying Professors.

The first class is fairly harmless. It only slightly tends to snoot the others. Being "aristocrats" by birth, these women have conveniently forgotten that in many cases their husbands were only "aristocrats" by marriage, so to speak Ph.D.-in-laws of aristocracy. The second group, like all medians, is solidly innocuous. These women spring-boarded from farms and shops and factories. Being themselves graduates of colleges and universities, they only occasionally drop an aitch or insert a double negative. Like Presbyterian ministers' wives, they glory comfortably in their automatic social rank given them through marriage to another farm product, who also forgets only occasionally to avoid splitting his infinitives.

The trouble-makers, however, are in the third group. Here brew constant cauldrons of social intrigue and rivalry. Out of the pot boil beautiful plebeian professors' wives who must hide their origin by attempting to consort with the town's "best people," to the complete snubbing of their confrères' wives. Up with a burst of steam fly smart plebeian wives of F.F.V. professors who strive to cover their sense of social insecurity by always "running over for a little trip to Spain" each summer, and by having "four master bedrooms in their little town cottage." Why do intellectual women bother to concern themselves with social precedence?

Another peculiarity of professors' wives is their recreations. Before becoming one of these wives myself, I had naïvely supposed that nothing short of being a collector of First Editions of Browning or an annotator of Spenser would suffice me for a playtime alibi when I entered the intellectual sisterhood. I was soon exorcised of that concept. The recreative obsessions of professors' wives are as follows: dirt farming, golf championships, contract bridge, radio crooners, seeing Leslie Howard in the movies, tea with lemon, football games, and reading *Good Housekeeping*. Why do women of intellect follow such inutile playtime pursuits?

This leads me to the very crux of my argument. Like a true professor's wife myself, I must now advance to the blackboard and sum up my previous points in chalk:

I. Why do intellectual women marry professors?

II. Why do intellectual women wish non-mental careers for their children?

III. Why do intellectual women bother over social precedence?

IV. Why do intellectual women follow useless playtime pursuits?

The answer to all of these questions is that they don't. Professors' wives are not intellectual. They're just plain dumb.

THE NEW SIN CHART

By ERNEST L. MEYER

Editorial Staff, The Madison, Wis., Capital Times

THE general assembly of the Presbyterian Church formulated a list of eighty sins, including "road-hogging, inferiority complexes, and criticism." Since the list was promulgated a long time ago, other organizations and individuals, after wrestling with the devil, have come forward with their own improvements on the decalogue. Never behindhand in matters of reform, this writer herewith brands the following as sins most horrendous:

Laughing	Love
Generosity	Kindness
Tolerance	Intelligence
Humor	Beauty

Had I dictatorial powers, I would immediately provide the police with this sin chart, and let loose the hounds of the law on the heels of the public. Pastors and orators throughout the land would mobilize their eloquence, promising hell-fire to offenders. Movies and posters would shriek warnings. After a year of prosecutions, trials, spying, Senate investigations, debate, furor, filibusters, and with the jails overflowing with sin-chart violators, our country would witness a tremendous increase in

Laughing	Love
Generosity	Kindness
Tolerance	Intelligence
Humor	Beauty

Such a result would be inevitable and desirable. The nation's late experiment with Prohibition warrants the conclusion. It is our nature to look with longing at forbidden apples. The lamentable experience of Eve seems to have been overlooked by the Presbyterian theologians, who, obtusely, concoct a list of sins including road-hogging and criticism. Since then the automobile fatality rate has increased tremendously and William Lyon Phelps has written another book.

My sin chart is preferable. Laughing and wit will be outlawed by federal statute. Instantly, a hundred thousand laugheasies will spring up throughout our broad acres where, for a fee, patrons may sit in sound-proof booths and unbutton their larynxes to their heart's content.

The Federal Wipe-That-Smile-Off Squad will be kept busy hauling to jail people suspected of sniggery in the third degree. Grand juries will indict notorious outlaw members of the Ha-Ha Gang. Meanwhile, in laugheasies, in cellars and behind drawn blinds, citizens will indulge in an orgy of laughing such as has not been witnessed since orators solemnly informed us that we won the World War.

With generosity officially forbidden by the sin-chart, the country would drift illegally to the Golden Rule. In my mind's eye, I can see a friend approach me furtively in the street and beckon me to follow him into an alley. Making sure that he is unobserved, he whispers into my ear: "I'm a tough guy, see, and to hell with the cops! Here, let me lend you $10, and I don't care when you pay it back." Then he would slip me the tenner and race down the alley, with police at his heels.

The impetus to love would be powerful. At each corner there would stand a member of the Woman's Anti-Affection Association, ready to report to the gendarmes any sign of human tenderness. Again, in vision, I see a ravishing, golden-haired girl walk up to me, gaze into my eyes with passion (prohibited under Section 8 of the Federal Inhibition Law), and say to me swiftly and burningly: "Beloved, thout art beautiful as the goats of Sharon and I am thine till the sands of the Sahara grow cold and the cows come home." Then, favoring me with an illegal wink, she would turn and run, followed by the Anti-Affection spy armed with a bumbershoot.

Intelligence would be positively prohibited. Morons would be given federal licenses to practice moronism, including Congressional speeches and newspaper serial stories. What a spur to human intellect! Locked in clothes closets, citizens would concentrate sinfully on differential equations, Kant and astronomy, with immoral side excursions into binominal theorems. And conscientious professors, hired after passing the test for legal idiocy, would deliver themselves over to the police, confessing a wicked indulgence in irregular French verbs. We would, in a word, move into a new intellectual renaissance, centering in the great Academy of Leavenworth.

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